Hornets' Nest part three - The Circus of Doom, by Paul Magrs

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(The CD has a recap of the story so far with extracts from the previous two episodes.)

(Tom Baker's opening Doctor Who theme, composed by Ron Grainer.)

ANNOUNCER: (Tom Baker) Doctor Who. Hornets' Nest. The Circus Of Doom, by Paul Magrs. Starring Tom Baker and Richard Franklin.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) On the whole, small rural towns in the early part of Nineteenth Century England tend to be fairly quiet, especially first thing in the morning. But when the TARDIS materialised on the main street of Blandford, it was with its usual cheery brouhaha.
(TARDIS materialisation sound.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I stepped out into the brilliant June sunshine, and soon saw that there was no-one about. All along the street, shutters were down, curtains were drawn. It was past nine o'clock in the morning, and yet there was no-one stirring in this whole town, it seemed. As you can imagine, Mike, I was on the alert for anything untoward. Who knew when my enemies would show themselves? Who knew what disasters they had already brought about in this out-of-the-way spot? Luckily, I found a general store opened.
(Bell of shop as door opened.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) And I popped in under the pretext of stocking up on sweets. Rather too early, historically speaking, for jelly babies. (Laughs.) But I'm also partial to aniseed balls and humbugs. As I watched the rather demure and pretty shop assistant Sally emptying jars into the scales, I asked her why the town seemed so quiet.

SALLY: I think they must be tired this morning, sir. The whole of Blandford was out last night.
THE DOCTOR: The whole town?
SALLY: Not me and my father, sir. He doesn't approve of ... entertainments. But yes, most people were out last night.
THE DOCTOR: What's the matter? Why do you seem so worried?
SALLY: Shh! My father's working in the back room. He won't like me talking to a strange man about this ... this business.
THE DOCTOR: I'm no strange man. I'm the Doctor. And I don't like to see people looking scared.
SALLY: Are *you* one of the show people, sir?
THE DOCTOR: Not that I'm aware of.
SALLY: You're new in town. If my father came out the back room now, he might think you *belonged* to that travelling show.
THE DOCTOR: Suspicious sort is he, your father?
SALLY: He's protective of me, and you do look as if you might belong to some kind of show.
THE DOCTOR: I assure you, I don't. What kind of show are we talking about, anyway? I mean, it can't be that good if it sent everyone to sleep.
SALLY: It went on till very late, I believe. Naturally my father and I never attended the performance, but we heard the townsfolk coming back through the streets when it was over. It must have been after two o'clock. My father doesn't hold with that sort of thing.
THE DOCTOR: And neither do I, whatever that sort of thing might be - what was it?
SALLY: The Devil's work. Licentiousness. Wickedness. Or so he says.
THE DOCTOR: Really? Oh, come on.
SALLY: It's all true. And he swears he won't ever let me near such a farrago. That travelling show will be the death of this place. That's what he said. It will start the canker, the moral decay of our town. Proper fulminating, he was. I've never seen him quite so roused.
THE DOCTOR: Just a little travelling show? Surely it can't be such a threat.
SALLY: We saw them when they arrived. They came rolling through town in their carriages,

singing and showing off, banging a drum and blowing their horns. Elephants and monkeys and clowns there were, and freaks of nature. They put a woman with a beard at the front of their procession. She had a lion on a rope. The hunchbacked little goblin seemed to be in charge. Foreign he was.
THE DOCTOR: Hmm. Doesn't sound so outrageous to me.
SALLY: Perhaps not. Perhaps you're used to fancy ways and outlandish scenes, but we're good folk here. Respectable. We don't need dancing devils and enchanted beasts.
THE DOCTOR: And the whole town flocked to see this show last night?
SALLY: It was the first night of the circus. I dread to think what it's done to them. My father was right. Everyone still abed this morning? Are they all bewitched?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) And just at that moment the sweet jar slipped through her trembling fingers and smashed on the shop floor.

(Breaking glass jar. SALLY gasps.)
SALLY: Oh no! He'll have my guts for garters!
THE DOCTOR: Let me help you.
SALLY: No. You don't need to.
THE DOCTOR: I can't abide the waste of good gobstoppers.
SALLY: Please. You must leave here.
THE DOCTOR: You're really frightened, aren't you?
SALLY: I've a right to be. Can't you feel it in the air? Evil has entered our town. It's ... it's like the very air itself is quivering. I can almost hear it.
THE DOCTOR: Yes. What is this ghastly entertainment called - just so I know to avoid it, you understand?
SALLY: They call it, the Circus of Delights.

(Bird-song.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I took a brisk walk into the countryside breathing deep lungfuls of fresh Summer air. The hedgerows were humming and seething with life, and I was almost enjoying myself as I went out into the fields to take a look at this so-called Circus of Delights. Of course, it was just a huddle of tents and carriages, rather like a gypsy encampment, based around the smouldering remains of fires and a modestly sized big top, a faded and patched canvas monstrosity that had seen better days. All the circus folk were still asleep. Their snores seemed to form a gentle fugue with the hungry mutters from the monkeys, and the snuffling of elephants. A great roar went up from a disgruntled big cat craving its gory breakfast. I felt a kind of foreboding. I thought perhaps I had let that rather superstitious shop assistant affect my mood. This was just a shabby travelling show, all fading glitter, and rank with manure and rancid greasepaint. I just happened to be peering at a dilapidated pachyderm through the bars of its cage, when I happened to notice the figure of a dapper-looking man carrying a doctor's bag hurrying away from the site.

THE DOCTOR: Hello. Someone unwell?
DOCTOR FARROW: What business is that of yours, sir?
THE DOCTOR: I'm the Doctor, but I see you got here first. I take it you're the local doctor, judging by your bag. Is one of the clowns ill, perhaps, or a tiger?
DOCTOR FARROW: There are no tigers here.
THE DOCTOR: That's a pity. I'm very fond of tigers, you know. Who are you here to see?
DOCTOR FARROW: If it's any business of yours, I'm Doctor Adam Farrow, but there is no-one who requires my professional help in this place.
(Buzzing in background.)
DOCTOR FARROW: My sister is part of this ... troupe.
THE DOCTOR: Oh really? How proud you must be.
DOCTOR FARROW: Hardly. I wish it would leave. It's so tawdry. It's worse than I could have expected.
THE DOCTOR: In what way worse?
DOCTOR FARROW: My sister is an artist. Frances shouldn't be wasting her life in a sideshow of monsters and vagabonds.
THE DOCTOR: Are you saying your sister ran away with the circus? How wonderful. I always imagined doing that when I was a boy. We didn't get many circuses visiting though.

DOCTOR FARROW: She fled our family home in the south three years ago and none of us have seen her since then and now, now she's here, on my doorstep.
THE DOCTOR: I can see this is upsetting for you.
DOCTOR FARROW: Why am I telling you this? Who are you?
THE DOCTOR: I'm a friend. I'm here to help.
DOCTOR FARROW: Frances can't be helped. I've tried to cajole her. She is adamant she's staying here. She ran away with her goblin man three years ago and the die is cast. She will not be parted from him, or his vile carnival.
THE DOCTOR: Frances, eh?
DOCTOR FARROW: Are you with this parade of freaks? What are you, some - some kind of magician or mind-reader, i-is that how you loosened my tongue?
THE DOCTOR: I'm part of no-one's parade but my own.
DOCTOR FARROW: All the same, I don't like the look of you. Good day, sir.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) And the ill-natured surgeon stomped off back to the road that would return him to town. I didn't feel offended by him. I rarely feel offended by anything. It isn't worth the energy. And besides, I was very intrigued by all of this. The Circus of Delights, Mike. Hunchbacks and goblins, lions and artistes, and Frances. A sister called Frances, who had run away from respectability, and on top of all that, there was the drone of insects in the hedgerows. The lazy, contented purring of insects all around me. I had tracked them back to Eighteen Thirty-Two and they were stirring up trouble in this precise location.

(Buzzing of energy.)
THE DOCTOR: You're here, aren't you? You're here in the past. You're swarming about this place, hatching your plans. Well, here I am, ready for Round Three.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) But the hornets were lying low. I could hear them, almost tangibly feel their presence. But they didn't declare themselves just yet. They were trembling at the very periphery of my consciousness. Next, I made my way back to Blandford to find the inhabitants stirring at last. The men in silk breeches and waistcoats, the ladies in bonnets and shawls. For once, I felt rather out of place and anachronistic, even futuristic, in my Edwardian casuals ... and I'm afraid I attracted a number of hard stares. Ah, they chattered at my back, they eyed me top to toe as I meandered and perused the high street late that morning. But the gossip of the town was largely about the previous evening's performance. My advent in town paled as the topic of interest beside the gaudy spectacular that most souls had witnessed last night. "Are you going again? Are you returning tonight? The show they say will be repeated for five evenings. It is different every time. Will you return to the circus?" I caught the gist of these conflabs in the wool shop, the greengrocers, and on the dusty cobbles of the main drag. It seemed that everyone was concurring, the show had been stupendous. They would indeed be returning this evening, and for each subsequent show. Blandford was ablaze with a kind of whispery suppressed excitement. All that day, the ladies hurried to and fro between the shops and each other's parlours, where they sipped tea and crumbled the occasional biscuit as they sniped and gossiped with each other. There was a great kerfuffle throughout Blandford as they discussed the sights and splendours they had witnessed. "How amazing. How death-defying. How thrilling and hilarious it had all been. And that marvellous goblin, the Ringmaster. What a genius he must be. And that lady of the high wire. What a miracle! But what an unfortunate specimen. Really, how terribly sad for her." In the general store, quiet and shy, Sally listened as the ladies poured over their tales of enchantment. As she weighed out their goods and wrapped their purchases with paper and string, the girl was longing to go and see the Circus of Delights for herself. And as the usually quiet, reserved ladies of Blandford twittered, Sally was agog. Ah, but she heard about the parade of magic elephants and how they formed a pyramid that reached to the top of the tent. She heard about the lions, and how the goblin-like Antonio the Ringmaster bravely taunted and whipped the King of the Jungle, and she heard about the clown funeral, every midnight, in which the clowns held their macabre dance to the death, and chopped up the body of one of their numbers, just for laughs. Poor Sally made up her mind to sneak out that very night from under the nose of her boorish father while the shopkeeper slept after his heavy dinner. She'd tiptoe out of the village, and lose herself in the crowd of neighbours thronging towards the Big Top. Word had spread. There wasn't a single soul who didn't want to attend that evening's gaudy revels. As if people weren't keen enough already, a parade swept through the rutted dirt track that was the town's main road during the height of

the Summer's afternoon. It began with a faint jingling and jangling, then we could hear the tinkling of bells, the crash of cymbals...
(Sound of band.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) They were coming to town! The ladies scuttled about excitedly, jostling for position as the troupe marched down the street...
(Cheering/whooping.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) ... advertising the evening's show. How they all cheered and bellowed. I was quite amazed. These respectable ladies hooting like monkeys and shrieking like macaws. Their menfolk were even more astounded. I saw Doctor Farrow passing the parade on his way to an appointment, and he was scowling at the circus people. He stopped and looked appalled at them. Those monochrome clowns whose only flash of colour was their ruby-red lips and nails, the sneering camel and stately elephants, but most of all, the town surgeon looked piqued by the dwarf at the head of the procession, banging his drum as he stomped along. This Ringmaster was a hideous gargoyle of a man, with his lurid stovepipe hat, and uniform bedecked with strange medals. He leered and gurned at the ladies suggestively as he marched, behaving for all the world as if he owned the town of Blandford, and all the ladies in it. Little did anyone realise. Beside the Ringmaster walked the star of his show - the beautiful Francesca, or Frances as Doctor Farrow knew her. She was resplendent in a leopard-print dressing robe trimmed with ostrich feathers, and she looked every inch the exotic star. But the oddest thing about this famous trapeze artiste was the huge bushy beard which seemed to be a natural feature of her haughty visage. It glistened bright and black in the brilliant sun. I was rather taken aback myself by the spectacle of the Circus of Delights' afternoon jaunt. Who doesn't admire great physical prowess, that sense of the body being as finely-tuned as an engine, health and fitness the prime concern? I knew that each and every member of the circus would adhere to a strict fitness regime. Not for them the temptations of tobacco or the bottle. To these people, their bodies were temples. They paraded to strange, rather morbid music which slithered under your skin and stayed in your head for hours after the parade had passed. I locked eyes with the Ringmaster Antonio just once as he passed my way beside the general store. His azure eyes blazed with contempt as he noticed I wasn't cheering enthusiastically like the rest. I glared back, giving him as good as I got, and then I got rather more than I bargained for. For as Antonio the malevolent circus dwarf swept by, I could hear the drone of insects about his small person. It was him. The hornets were inside *him*. My instincts were by now finely-honed. I knew the sound of those tiny devils all too well. In a way, it came as no surprise that the leader of this weird show was the locus of the hive. Now I knew for sure that I was in the right place, and I knew that I would have to be at the show that night come hell or high water. I watched them march out of the town, Francesca's proud bearded head was like the prow of a human ship as it sailed back into the bucolic haze of the late afternoon on plains. You could tell that the citizens of Blandford yearned to simply up sticks at once and follow them. But they would have to be patient. A terrible shriek came out of the crowd.

OLD LADY: Caroline? Caroline, where are you?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I found an elderly woman in some distress.

OLD LADY: It's my sister, sir, Caroline, she's gone. She's wandered away. She's not the full shilling, sir. She oughtn't to go off by herself.
THE DOCTOR: Surely she can't go far in a small town like this.
OLD LADY: Somehow I know she's gone for good.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I knew she was right. I thought about those chattering monkeys and the clowns in the parade. They had grabbed her and snagged her, this forlorn woman's sister. They had taken her away with them. Come sundown, just a few short hours after dinner, the whole town was following the trail of the parade. It seemed that everyone was swarming off to the circus. I blended as well as I could in the crowd, though most kept a wary distance from me. In the murmuring horde, I noted Sally, the shopkeeper's daughter, sneaking herself away amongst the press of bodies. Clearly she was hoping that no-one would tell her father where she had been, but the crowd was intent, and remarkably little gossiping went on. That seemed unnatural to me. Doctor Farrow sidled up. I could smell whisky on his breath, as if he'd needed courage to return to the circus.

DOCTOR FARROW: So you've come to see this spectacle for yourself?
THE DOCTOR: Did you talk to your sister?
DOCTOR FARROW: She won't listen to me. She's thoroughly under the influence of that Antonio, her pet dwarf.
THE DOCTOR: Yes, I saw that for myself during the parade. Tell me, was your sister always bearded?
DOCTOR FARROW: An unfortunate imbalance of the humours, sir. Nothing unnatural. Though nowadays she shames her family drawing such attention to it.
THE DOCTOR: The bearded Lady of the high wire, yes indeed. Most intriguing.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Doctor Farrow scowled at me for that, and we drifted apart as the crowd neared the shabby Big Top itself. A reverent hush rippled through the citizens of Blandford as we entered the tent. Our nostrils were assailed with a host of rank circus smells - greasy tallow, sawdusty ordure and spicy sweat, both human and animal. A heady brew that swirled smokily about us as we took our seats. I found myself in the Gods, perched precariously on seats suspended above the lion cages. Below our feet, the big cats padded remorselessly, eager to be set free. I was thrilled, despite myself. I never expected to be taken in by the ambiance of this gaudy entertainment, but I was.
(Crowd applause.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I found myself cheering with the others as the Ringmaster appeared and solicited our noisy approval.
(Audience noises of delight and approval.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) We stamped and clapped as he introduced act after act, and I had to admit, the show was marvellous.
(More circus crowd applause.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Then he brought on the dancing horses. Wonderful lily-white fillies prancing in breathtaking rings.
(Gasps, drum rolls, applause.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Gasps went up from the crowd when it was seen that the first horse had a passenger standing upon its back. A fearless woman in a sequined leotard who turned somersaults, and even balanced on her head while her mount was pelting at full speed. We roared our amazement.

OLD LADY: Caroline. Caroline, no!

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) It was the elderly woman I had seen in town. The one who had lost her sister. She was in the row in front of me.

(Drum roll and gasps from the audience in the background.)
OLD LADY: That's Caroline, that's my sister. What's she doing there? She's never been on horseback in her life.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) That seemed quite impossible to believe, given the gymnastics on display in the ring below. How curious, I thought. The circus was doing far more than drawing spectators. It was taking volunteers too, and seducing them into performing centre stage. Before we could do or say anything more, the thrilling equestrian display came to an end and Antonio the Ringmaster was cracking his whip, and asking for a volunteer from the audience, to help him with his next death-defying act. We all watched helplessly as Sally from the general store came stumbling out of the crowd. Almost unwillingly, as if hypnotised, she drifted down to the sawdust ring, and bowed her head submissively to the arrogant midget.

ANTONIO: (Italian accent) This girl is a very brave girl. She has run away this evening without the permission of her cruel slave-driver of a father. Is that right, Sally, no?
SALLY: Yes, you're right.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Antonio went on, licking his liver coloured lips quite ghoulishly.

ANTONIO: And you have devoted your young life to your father and his little shop, but you would rather be somewhere exciting, no? You would rather be here with us as part of our

show.
SALLY: Oh yes. More than anything.
(Cheering.)

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The crowd was on its feet. All the ladies, at any rate. They were ecstatic, shrieking till the canvas walls and rooftop shook. The Ringmaster made her climb upon a podium, and as she stood there shaking, smiling shyly at the audience, she underwent what appeared to be some kind of awful initiation rite. Antonio stood still before her...
(Drum roll.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) ... and as we all watched holding our breath, something ghastly beyond belief occurred. An oily black smoke came pouring out of his ears and eyes, from the sleeves of his scarlet uniform jacket, from the collar of his pristine white shirt. A noisy smoke that buzzed and hummed, a noise I knew only too well. The hornets that possessed the insinuating little man were manifesting themselves brazenly before the crowd. They lifted into a solid miasma of evil, and before any of us knew it, surrounded the helpless form of the girl called Sally.

SALLY: No ... No!

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I came to my senses at once. I vaulted several rows of seats, I think. I was so alarmed and ashamed at just sitting there doing nothing and drinking in all the horrible extravagances of that show.. My fellow audience members were passively observing, their faces were masks of cruelly vicarious delight. I thundered down the rattling steps and flung myself into the sawdust ring.

THE DOCTOR: Stop this at once. Call off your insect masters. That girl doesn't deserve this.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) But Antonio the Ringmaster swivelled smartly on one of his built-up heels and sneered at me.

ANTONIO: Ah! This is the newcomer to town, is it not? I have been instructed to pay special attention to you, to welcome your presence in our show very warmly. You are among us now, and you must join the dance, Doctor.
THE DOCTOR: I don't dance. I don't care to make a spectacle of myself in public. Hah!
ANTONIO: The insects will not harm her. They are merely toying with her. They do not sting. They are simply keen to dally in the energy, the vibrations her young mind gives off. They will feed off her imagination, her febrile dream's desires, and stymied life-force, all her darkest frustrated thoughts and twisted envies, the tiniest thoughts of malice that lurk under the girl's innocent surface. These the hornets will draw out into the open and syphon away for their own delectation.
THE DOCTOR: How very odd. So they feed on negative feelings, on the raw energy of hidden thoughts.
ANTONIO: (Swarm voice) You know nothing really about your foes, do you, Doctor? You understand so very little about us. After everything, you are fighting shadows, chimeras. Our minds are too subtle and nimble. Why not simply give up?
THE DOCTOR: Never. Set that girl free. Let her go at once.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The dwarf cackled with evil glee. He turned away cracking his whip, and the clowns came gathering at a shambolic run. They seized me...
(Cheering.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) ... and the crowd roared with insane approval. I struggled and fought, but the clowns were possessed of an inhuman strength. The muscles beneath their absurd uniforms were like steel. They led me towards a penned-off arena, and Antonio cracked his whip lavishly, maniacally. He was just about drooling in anticipation.

ANTONIO: Place him before the judgement of the King of the Jungle.
(Cheering.)

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Oh, the audience loved the sound of that. I wasn't quite so keen. It's fair to say that I have been in trickier situations, but also, that I've been in far more relaxed

ones. Looking at the savage, slavering maw of the lion as it approached counts as one of my more worried moments. Held tight by the unwavering clowns, I was forced to my knees on the filthy sawdust. I tried to protest, to call out for some kind of sense to be restored, but there was bloodlust in the air. As the clowns leaned over me, I could smell their rancid breath, but I could also see that their eyes were vacant and black. I couldn't be sure, but I thought I saw tiny shapes agitating inside those glassy clown eyes. It seemed they were *all* possessed, the whole circus troupe. I felt at that moment that I was doomed. The lion loped its way towards me in leisurely fashion, quite intent, as it brought one massive paw in front of the other. Oh, the old beast knew how to milk the crowd's reactions. When it was right in front of me, that audience went very quiet. It opened its huge jaws in what seemed at first to be a lackadaisical yawn.
(Drum roll.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Before I could say another word, the clowns took hold of my whole body and pushed me forward. My head was thrust rudely into the lion's mouth.
(Cymbals.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The audience went berserk with noisy approval.
(Cheering.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I could hear the shopkeeper's girl Sally standing some yards away screaming at them to stop, to set us both free. At my back, the black and white clowns were sniggering and giggling. And the oddest thing was, I was expecting a foul stench of decaying meat and intestinal juices. I was expecting a furnace-like blast of heat to envelop me. But the lion's mouth was quite cold inside, and it smelled of ... . I blinked and frowned. It smelled of formaldehyde, and mothballs, and worn leather. Now the clowns were shrieking with helpless laughter and so were the crowd.
(Cheering.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) A vast roar went up from inside the Big Top, and it wasn't emanating from the hollow lion. Slowly, I withdrew my head and stared up at the unfortunate King of beasts. I grinned, trying to make light of my being tricked, but a chill ran through me when the lion's glass eyes swivelled to glare at me, and I could see the insect legs flickering and tapping within. I was plagued by them, even back here in the past. The little circus orchestra gave me a fanfare of triumph as I was forced to take my bow.
(Brief orchestral noise then cheering.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I was joined by the apparently unhurt Sally, who was trembling and shaking in her shoes as the audience cheered us. Antonio the Ringmaster came tripping along to congratulate us, and shoo us off his stage, our part in the revels now ended.

THE DOCTOR: I suppose you found all that very amusing?
ANTONIO: It was a great success. Nothing is more exciting than the fear of instant death, and nothing more cathartic than the sudden reprieve.
THE DOCTOR: And this is it? This is your marvellous show, scaring people like this?
ANTONIO: (Laughs) Oh no, Doctor. There is so much more to it all.

(Jaunty orchestral organ tune.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Then Sally and I were shoved unceremoniously into the backstage area while the orchestra played some sort of interlude music, and the next acts prepared to go on.
(Applause.)

THE DOCTOR: Were you hurt?
SALLY: I thought they were going to sting me to death. They were wasps, weren't they?
THE DOCTOR: Hornets. They were just playing with you.
SALLY: How can they train insects to play a part in a circus? It's absurd.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I told her that I thought it was more a case of the hornets training the humans to play their part, then she pursued me as I stormed off. I took out a penknife and slashed a hole in the canvas wall.

THE DOCTOR: You can get out and run home.
SALLY: I'm not going anywhere.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I started to bundle her out.

THE DOCTOR: You're going back to Blandford, and you're going to tell your father - and anyone else who isn't already hypnotised by this hideous carnival - to do something about getting it stopped. Now, go.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Suddenly, someone else was at our side.

DOCTOR FARROW: Well said, Doctor. But let's get my sister Frances out of this queer sideshow before we send the rest of them away.
SALLY: Doctor Farrow. Where did you spring from?
DOCTOR FARROW: I thought I'd better sneak round the back to see that you two were none the worse for your dreadful experiences at the hands of those devils. Now, I insist, Sally, that you return home at once.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) She complied reluctantly and this left Farrow and me tiptoeing about in the shadier recesses of the circus. The show was continuing. All eyes were on the main stage leaving us relatively free to seek out Farrow's sister.
DOCTOR FARROW: I can't understand why Frances would be involved in something like this. She has always been the gentlest of souls. She wouldn't hurt a fly - and yet this circus is dedicated as far as I can see to ... various forms of torture.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Indeed, moments later we discovered a broken body heaped in a wheelbarrow and stowed away out of sight. Farrow checked it over urgently, and saw that it was hopeless.

DOCTOR FARROW: Oh ... It's Miss Caroline.
THE DOCTOR: Of course. The old lady they stole away. They made her ride that horse and turn cartwheels.
DOCTOR FARROW: Like a hag possessed by some evil magic. They've destroyed her.
(*This is where part one ended and part two started on the radio*.)
THE DOCTOR: Do you believe in evil magic?
DOCTOR FARROW: I'm a man of medicine, Doctor, logic and science. This is a rational age.
THE DOCTOR: Even here in this rural backwater?
DOCTOR FARROW: I don't know what can cause the terrible things we've seen here. I don't know what could change my sister's temperament so absolutely that she's content to spend her life consorting with monsters such as these.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I looked past him.

THE DOCTOR: Now is your chance to ask her.
DOCTOR FARROW: What?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The Bearded Lady had stepped into our midst. She was standing before us in a glittering gown studded with theatrical jewellery. Her hair was pinned up in a rather severe style, and her fulsome beard was oiled, and curled magnificently. Her dark eyes shone in fury at her brother's words.

FRANCESCA: Will you stop pursuing me, Adam? I have nothing to say to you. I won't leave the Circus of Delights. I won't leave Antonio. He needs me.
DOCTOR FARROW: Look, there's a corpse here. This poor woman. Can't you see? Don't you feel anything?
FRANCESCA: An unfortunate accident. But the woman begged. She pleaded with Antonio to be allowed to take part. She *wanted* to ride the wild horses in the circus ring. It was a risk she took only too willingly.
DOCTOR FARROW: That is rot and you know it! Doctor, can't you help me to make her see sense?
THE DOCTOR: She seems rather far gone to me.
FRANCESCA: You. I have heard all about you.
THE DOCTOR: Have you indeed? And who has been telling you about me, mm?
FRANCESCA: Antonio knows you. He knows all about you. You are dangerous, our ancient

enemy.
THE DOCTOR: Ancient, I? The cheek of it.
DOCTOR FARROW: What - what is this? Why is this man your enemy? Frances.
FRANCESCA: I am not Frances. I'm not your sister. I am far more wonderful and powerful than that.
THE DOCTOR: You can't reason with her, Farrow. I've seen this before - innocent beings caught up in the power of these wicked creatures, these insects.
DOCTOR FARROW: Insects?
THE DOCTOR: Look.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I bent to pick up something I had noticed crawling from one of the breathless nostrils of Miss Caroline's corpse.
(Buzzing.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) A single hornet was struggling free of this dead shell. I seized it by its wings and pinioned it helplessly. I held it up for Doctor Farrow to see.

DOCTOR FARROW: It was inside her.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The hornet thrashed and fizzed with fury between by fingers, its thorax arched madly as it lashed out uselessly with its sting. I told Farrow and his bearded sister...

THE DOCTOR: This is our enemy. This is what seeks to draw out the living energy of everyone here. This tiny vampire and its trillion-strong hive.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I set the hornet free, and it buzzed angrily about my head before skimming off to report to its superiors elsewhere.

FRANCESCA: What nonsense. What are you doing, Adam, seeking help from this dangerous idiot?
THE DOCTOR: Dangerous I may be, my dear, but I'm no idiot whereas you are, I'm afraid. Being with Antonio the Ringmaster will bring an end to your life. In fact, I'd say you're already as dead as Miss Caroline here.
FRANCESCA: I am the star of this circus. I am its highlight. My act is the pinnacle of each evening's performance. Antonio will never let me die.
THE DOCTOR: I wouldn't be so sure.
FRANCESCA: I can look after myself. Others die, those who can't survive the rigours of this life, but I will.
DOCTOR FARROW: Frances, I don't even recognise you. You aren't the same girl.
THE DOCTOR: That's what she's just been telling you, Farrow, and what's more, she's doomed.
FRANCESCA: Stop saying that.
THE DOCTOR: Do you want to know how I know?
FRANCESCA: Antonio says you aren't from here. He says you ... know about Time.
THE DOCTOR: Quite right. And ... I recognise your feet. Size fives, I think.
DOCTOR FARROW: Oh, come on, man, this is absurd.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I pointed implacably at her legs.

THE DOCTOR: Those satin dancing slippers and their ribbons, those dainty feet of yours, Francesca, scarred and gnarled as they are by years of practice on the high wire. I'd recognise them anywhere, and I tell you, I have seen them before, a hundred years from now, desiccated like the relics of a saint or the frangible remains of an evil Pharaoh. They will outlast you, Francesca.
FRANCESCA: Get away from me. Leave me alone.
THE DOCTOR: The insects will get inside of you. They will nibble away at your fibres, and your will, and every last human remnant of your body and mind. Unless you get out of this place at once, Francesca, the hornets will wear you down to nothing, till only your clapped-out feet and your dancing shoes remain. This I have seen.
DOCTOR FARROW: You really are quite insane, aren't you?

FRANCESCA: He believes he is some kind of prophet. You are a fool for listening to him, Adam. This is all nonsense. Take him. Get out of my sight. I need to prepare for my performance.
THE DOCTOR: Discombobulated you, have I?
FRANCESCA: Go! I'm warning you, Adam. Get him away from me.
THE DOCTOR: You should be scared. You should be very scared.
FRANCESCA: Clowns? Clowns, come and take them.
DOCTOR FARROW: All right, we're going.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The physician was confused and angry as he led us out of the tent through the gap I had earlier cut in the canvas. Farrow was distressed at his sister's brutalised manner, and he had also lost patience with his best ally.

DOCTOR FARROW: You've made everything much worse with your babbling.
THE DOCTOR: Everything I tried to warn her about is true. I have been into the future. I know what comes of these nights of the circus.
DOCTOR FARROW: I don't know what to believe. But there is something weird here, something that defies my logic.
THE DOCTOR: Will you let me tell you what I know about these insects, and why we need to get your sister away from their influence?
DOCTOR FARROW: We'll go to my surgery. I won't sleep the rest of this night. I'll listen to you, though God help me, I don't know why I should.
THE DOCTOR: Good man.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) And so we tramped our way back through the dark country lanes back to Blandford, where all was silent and almost completely deserted, and I sat in Doctor Farrow's antiquated consulting rooms. He lit the fire and boiled a kettle, and I sat down to tell him a potted version of my hornet encounters so far. And we sat through the night, just as you and I are doing, Mike, and I struggled to make this Nineteenth Century man, this child of the Enlightenment understand the curious devilry of our alien foes. Well, we talked until very late, and I can't even remember how many stories I told Farrow in order to convince him. Once you start explaining these things, it's rather like unravelling an extraordinarily long piece of knitting. One thing leads to another. The inquisitive Doctor Farrow wanted to know how it was I could travel so blithely through Time and Space, and where was it I came from anyway? Et cetera, et cetera. I must have dozed for a little while in the early morning. I was propped up on a chair in his study, blinking in the light through the curtain nets. No sign of Farrow. He had placed a tartan rug over my knees, which was very thoughtful, since the fire seemed to be long dead. He wasn't to know how little I feel the cold. I found him in the little scullery kitchen out back, making our breakfast, and looking rather determined.

(Sizzling of cooking.)
THE DOCTOR: I see you've been out for provisions. That bacon smells delicious.
DOCTOR FARROW: Sally the shop girl never returned home last night. Her father is beside himself with worry. I'm afraid I was cowardly, I didn't have the heart to tell him what I knew about her.
THE DOCTOR: They must have summoned her back to the circus. Once they have possessed a living being, the hornets can be very tenacious.
DOCTOR FARROW: In the street there are others looking for neighbours and relatives. Several people have disappeared, Doctor, people who never came back from the circus last night.
THE DOCTOR: Poor Sally. She seemed a very nice girl.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Over the breakfast table, Farrow looked at me very earnestly.

DOCTOR FARROW: You meant it when you said my sister is doomed, didn't you? Nothing, not even if she breaks free of this terrible hold Antonio has over her, nothing can save her now.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I stared glumly at my fried bread. I couldn't lie to this man.

DOCTOR FARROW: You have been in the future, and you were serious about having seen ...

Frances's remains. How they still wore those ballet shoes.
THE DOCTOR: I also told you that I can't unmake the future. But I can perhaps limit the damage the hornets will cause by cornering and containing their influence and their effects upon history.
DOCTOR FARROW: Yes. Yes, I understood all that - you ... you were talking about the world, about destiny and all of Time, about cosmic matters, Doctor. But even as a man of science, I don't care about those. I am a provincial country doctor in a small town. I care about what is around me. That's the difference between us. And I want to save my sister.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I nodded, almost envious of his detached stance. After breakfast, we stepped into the mid-morning sun. We tried to slip past the town's denizens without attracting undue attention, but a gaggle of the busybody ladies spied us trying to leave via the main street. They surrounded us, bonnets quivering with agitation, brandishing furled and beribboned parasols. Each one of these ladies looked whey-faced and exhausted from their night at the entertainment. All of them had heard the rumours. They had noticed that certain neighbours had gone missing. Some of them had even lost family members. "Doctor Farrow, Doctor Farrow!" they called shrilly. It was like being pursued down the street by geese.

DOCTOR FARROW: I don't know what's happening in that circus, but I think there is something wicked about it, something unholy even.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) They drew back in horror, both delighted and appalled at once. Then they recognised me.

OLD LADY: It's him. It's that man. The one with his head in the lion's mouth.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I felt my grin turn sheepish as they surrounded me.

OLD LADY: What did it feel like? Were you awfully scared? What's it like behind the scenes at the Circus of Delights? Did you think you were never going to get away?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The ladies were feverish and excitable. The circus and its noxious proximity was getting to them, I thought, in a very peculiar way.

THE DOCTOR: Come on, Farrow.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Unlike him, I didn't feel obliged to answer these nosey ladies' questions. I stalked off out of town, with Farrow dogging my heels.

DOCTOR FARROW: They seem to be in a very strange condition. It wouldn't surprise me if they all ran away to the circus one of these nights.
THE DOCTOR: That's exactly what Antonio and his masters want. They use human bodies as nests for colonies of their kind. That's what Antonio is. He wants to proliferate. He and his masters will take possession of all these women, and send them out into the world.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The big top and its surrounding shanty town was beginning to stir with the noise of beasts. This time I wasn't content to go wandering blithely into their midst, drawing attention to myself. This time I felt that the subtle approach was called for. As we hung around at the periphery of the encampment, I nudged Farrow and pointed at the gaudiest and most garish of the caravans. It was intricately carved and painted gold. A number of grimy foreign flags were proudly displayed on its turreted roof. It had to be where the Ringmaster resided. It was unguarded. I made Farrow watch my back, and we avoided the Strong Man, the carneys, and the shifty-looking clowns.

DOCTOR FARROW: How strange, that the clowns wear their make-up in the daytime as well.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I paid no heed, and got him to keep guard outside as I slipped into the relatively palatial trailer of Antonio the Dwarf. He was alone in there, still asleep on his child-sized bed, with his bedclothes pulled up to his chin and drool issuing from his twisted mouth. I sat down beside his bedside and listened. Beneath the horrible, fluting snores, I could

hear the tell-tale buzz of the insects inside of him.
(Multiple buzzing sounds.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I wondered how much of Antonio was left inside, how much of a human being could be nibbled away from within, and how much of his mind could be whittled down until he stopped being a human being at all. It looked as if Antonio was already a hollow man, one who might crumble into dust at any second.
(Buzzing continues.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Looking at him there, the Ringmaster was like a troll, turned to stone by his own foolish shenanigans. I prodded him gently awake, and saw the flash of alarm in his eyes. He clearly never expected anyone to challenge him, or to beard him in his musky den. I mesmerised him quite easily, fixing him with my best implacable stare, and soothing his vexatious mind with calming words. At last, I could ask him a thing or two.

THE DOCTOR: Antonio, will you answer my questions, mm?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I needed to go back, much further back. Doctor Farrow's sister was hopelessly lost. Her body was forfeit, her mind gone. I was destined to meet her remains in the future, and I could apparently do little to avoid disaster in Blandford, but if I went further back, into the past, if I could chase this influence back to its starting point, then perhaps, perhaps ...

THE DOCTOR: Antonio, where do you come from? Where did you first meet these insects?
ANTONIO: I was nothing before they took me. I was despised. I was shunned. No-one would have anything to do with Antonio. But I met them, out in the lagoons. I was trying to run away. They came to me. They gave Antonio gifts. Powers beyond his wildest dreams. I could see into the minds of others, play the thoughts and feelings of others like a musician plays upon the strings of his instrument. I returned to my home to face my persecutors, and I destroyed them. Me, little Antonio, the vile dwarf, the ugly thief child, I burned out their minds one at a time. And they all saw in their dying moments that it was the goblin boy taking revenge on them. The troglodyte. Have you heard the hornets laughing, Doctor, eh? They buzz so hard with amusement, it feels like all your insides are aching and shaking with merriment.
THE DOCTOR: When was this, and where? How old were you?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Antonio's heavily-lidded eyes flew open and he stared straight at me. I was disconcerted by the dark shadows flitting behind his blank stare. I knew they were looking out at me from somewhere inside their host, but I didn't care. By now I was used to facing them down. Each time I confronted them, I learnt a little more.

ANTONIO: My home is Venice, Doctor. A whole city as gaudy and decadent as the circus itself. I think of my travelling show as a glimmering shard of Venice's spectacularly decadent charms. I can never return home. There have been too many murders, too much revenge. My city often turns a blind eye to such things, especially when they are perpetrated in the heat of the annual carnivale. But my revenges were too comprehensive - once I became empowered and possessed by my masters, I took my revenge on everyone who ever laughed at me or taunted me in the most lavish and painful and Baroque fashion. I was a child, Doctor. Did I mention that, eh? I was a mere thirteen years old, when I killed my enemies, when I was possessed by the swarm.
THE DOCTOR: No Antonio, you didn't mention that. What a lot of hatred must have lain in wait, dormant inside you, after all that bullying and contempt.
ANTONIO: I was thirteen. I tried to leave my city. I took a boat. I stole one from a boatyard. I set off for the lagoon. I didn't know where I was going, and I sat on a small island in the warm shallows, seething with hate and misery ... and that was when it appeared before me. It was a magician's trick.
(TARDIS materialisation sound.)
ANTONIO: It arrived with an elephantine roar, stupendous, bravo! A blue box.
THE DOCTOR: A blue box?
ANTONIO: It was a marvel. It instilled in me a love of trickery, of stage magic. It was all for me, I felt, sitting there, an ugly dwarf on an obscure island. This magic box arriving out of nowhere, like fate itself. The door opened slightly, revealing a chilling whiteness within, an infinite glow from inside the box. It was as if Heaven had come down from the skies to claim me. Heaven, parcelled up in this strange box.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I stared at Antonio's face. He was rapt with pleasure, with beatific nostalgia.

(Buzzing of swarm.)
ANTONIO: And that was when my masters came for me. The swarm issued out of the box, quite calmly, no haste, as if they knew I was waiting for them. There, in Seventeen Sixty-Eight, on the lagoon outside Venice, and my life ever since has been full of marvels.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Antonio fell silent then. He had told me quite enough. He fell back into his extravagant satin pillows and I sat there, appalled. What had I done? What was I *going* to do? Had I somehow unleashed these monstrosities myself? Was Antonio's fate all of *my* doing? And Francesca's, and Mrs Wibbsey's, and Ernestina's? I shook my head to clear it, and then the most horrible thing yet occurred. The hornets exited their host.
(Multiple insects buzzing.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) They came tumbling and crawling out of his nose and ears. Even tiny ones scraped their way out of his tear ducts. They whirled and buzzed evily as they filled the close confines of his circus trailer. I batted them back, but it was hopeless. The air was thick with them, cloying like smoke. I was stung again and again. I cried out, and for a while I was convinced the insects would kill me. But the swarm began to thin. They were fleeing the small caravan. Every single one of the hornets issued out into the open air and within seconds, I was standing there, smarting but alive. As for Antonio, he was now the grey shell of a man, sitting up in his tiny bunk, staring blankly, greyly, straight ahead, a gargoyle abandoned. There came a shout from outside, someone calling my name. I turned and eased open the door. The clowns were there waiting for me, grinning through their greasy and primitive make-up. They had a knife poised at Doctor Farrow's throat, and their red eyes were glinting in triumph at me, knowing that I was helpless, that I was to blame for this whole dreadful farrago. But where had all the hornets gone?

DOCTOR FARROW: Doctor? Doctor, are you awake?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Farrow and the young girl Sally woke me. I groaned painfully and struggled to sit up. We were in some kind of stinking cage, formerly used for circus beasts.

THE DOCTOR: Eh? What - what happened?
DOCTOR FARROW: Those ruffian clowns set upon you. I couldn't stop them. They knocked you out. I'm sorry, Doctor.
THE DOCTOR: That's all right, Farrow. They're possessed of more than human strength.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I looked about me, and realised that we were not alone in our small cell. The ladies who had wandered away from Blandford were crouching in the straw, looking very wild and frightened, about twenty of them.

OLD LADY: What are they going to do with us?
THE DOCTOR: You saw what they did to your sister. They made her ride the wild horses till her body was broken and she was dead. If they get their own way, I expect that's the kind of fate that awaits *you*. Or perhaps an even worse destiny - living possession by alien insects. That's what you have walked into by coming here to this circus of doom, not delights.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The ladies gasped in horror and shock. But I wasn't about to mollify *them*. I had a job to do here, an important job, and they had complicated it with their hapless presence. We waited till the dark tent around us was quiet. Later in the afternoon the majority of the clowns had sloped off to some other task. Then I picked the lock of the cage with sublime ease, and ushered the ladies out.

THE DOCTOR: Run, and don't look back, and do not return to the circus this evening. Tell everyone in Blandford, if you come back here then you're dead! Sally, make sure they go back.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The ladies didn't need telling twice. Sally rounded them up like a sheepdog. But what of this evening, I wondered, when the hurdy-gurdy music starts up again,

and it drifts across the open fields to town. Will they hear it? Will it snag their attentions? Will they come wandering back en masse? I couldn't think about that now. I had to act quickly.

THE DOCTOR: Farrow, we must get your sister out of here by fair means or foul. Just get her away from this circus and the influence of Antonio.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I looked at Farrow's face. His was an expression of fierce determination to save his sister. I couldn't behave as if her death was inevitable. Farrow and I clung to the shadows of the empty Big Top, skulking around its perimeter as we made our escape. So far, so good. No sign of the clowns. But neither had we seen anyone else.

DOCTOR: FARROW: At least the ladies got away safely. Sally's a good girl.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) His sister's trailer was empty. Poking around desultorily, we found nothing more revealing than the spartan paraphernalia of the travelling life, her dressing table strewn with well-used make-up and hair tonics. Farrow cried out as he chanced upon a cameo painting of himself and his sister as children.

DOCTOR FARROW: She hasn't forgotten. There is some hope, then.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) A great scream went up at that point. We dashed outside, only to see a small crowd had gathered before the Big Top. Francesca herself was there, resplendent in her leotard and beard. She was surrounded by cheering clowns.
(Crowd noises.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) And then we both saw that she was throttling the life out of Sally.

FRANCESCA: This is what we do to those who try to flee the Circus of Delights.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) Farrow stumbled down the trailer stairs in shock.

DOCTOR FARROW: She's insane. She can't do that. No, Frances, no, for God's sake, that poor girl.
FRANCESCA: What if I killed her now, Adam? Would it really matter? This girl's an insect.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) A curious choice of words at just that moment. As I drew closer to this macabre tableau...
(Buzzing of many insects.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I saw that there were in fact a number of insects dancing around Francesca's head. Dark clusters of them were gathering in the air all round the trapeze artiste. She hardly registered their presence, until the cloud thickened and seethed with buzzing life.

THE DOCTOR: Farrow, keep back from her.
DOCTOR FARROW: What's happened to her? What's happened to my sister?

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I knew that it was too late. She had been subsumed already.

FRANCESCA: I have never felt like this before.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The insects were writhing in her lavish beard. She reached forward almost negligently, and twisted her hands about Sally's throat. She was about to break the girl's neck. I stepped forward abruptly. An almighty tussle broke out at once between myself, Francesca, the clowns and Farrow, with Sally managing to extricate herself sorely and make a break for it. Our punch-up went on for some moments, and it was soon obvious that Francesca was possessed of a manic and unnatural strength.

DOCTOR FARROW: Doctor, she's bolting.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) This was my responsibility. Destiny was playing itself out under the Big Top. I knew I had a role to play, and as I hurtled into the tent, I knew there was only one direction in which the trapeze artiste would go. I've never been keen on heights. I watched her

clamber with ease up the rope ladders, making for her eyrie at the top of the tent. I gave myself no time to think and tore after her, climbing hand over hand, my scarf lashing foolishly about me. I heard the others, Farrow, Sally, all the clowns and circus carneys come dashing into the top to watch us climb. I glanced down once, just once, to see the circus folk looking stunned and confused. Antonio's influence was gone, it seemed. The insects were busy with Francesca. She continued to climb remorselessly until she reached the very highest of the taut high wires. I groaned to myself as I saw her step out onto the quivering rope. I didn't dare imagine how high up we were, but she was reckless and mad with the hornets' infestation.

FRANCESCA: This is my element. I belong here, with the hornets. We dance upon the air.
THE DOCTOR: Francesca, there's no safety net.
FRANCESCA: I dance each night without a safety net. That is why they flock to see the bearded lady. I'm the star of this show. Didn't you know that?
THE DOCTOR: But the show is at an end, my dear.
FRANCESCA: Rubbish. I am at the height of my powers. Especially now, now the hornets have left that fool Antonio. It's my show now. I can rise to ever greater heights.
THE DOCTOR: Please, please be careful. You're disorientated, you don't know what you're doing.
FRANCESCA: On the contrary ... (Swarm voice) We know precisely what we are doing? Do you think it matters to us whether this girl is alive or dead, Doctor? In fact, it is easier for us if the vehicle we choose for our nest is a corpse. They complain less. They are more compliant.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) The hornets were driving Francesca to dance ever more perilously on the wire.
(Gasps of astonishment from a group.)
THE DOCTOR: (narrating) I could hear the gasps from way below in the sawdust ring as she executed a series of perfect twirls, on one foot. Her tiny feet flexed and jabbed.

THE DOCTOR: You have no right to toy with human lives like this.
FRANCESCA: (swarm voice) But you know that we do, Doctor.
THE DOCTOR: No-one has the right to possess another's will, to take over and destroy their body like this.
FRANCESCA: (swarm voice) Do you think we would be here in this time if it wasn't for you, Doctor? You are beginning to realise your implication in our history, are you not? And you see that whatever we do, you are the cause of it.
THE DOCTOR: I refute that.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) By now, I had almost without knowing it, stepped onto the high wire myself. I was inching along the bucking, jouncing trapeze wire towards the girl whose bearded face was twisted in hatred, and spitting accusations at me.

FRANCESCA: (swarm voice) If you try to grab her, this girl will fling herself into the air. We'll destroy her, Doctor.
THE DOCTOR: All right. I'll back up.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) But backing up was easier said than done. I was transfixed by Francesca's eyes which were blazing. I felt the evil wills of a million insects trained upon me. They despised me, all of them.

FRANCESCA: Goodbye, Doctor, for now.
THE DOCTOR: No.
FRANCESCA: I've an appointment with destiny. You know that.
THE DOCTOR: No ... Oh.

THE DOCTOR: (narrating) And with that, she flung herself into the open air. She didn't even try to save herself. The force of her leap dislodged me from the wire too, but I managed to snag hold of it as I fell, almost slicing off my fingers in the process. As I hung there, I heard the screams from below and the sickening thud as Francesca plummeted into the circus ring, which had been the scene of her greatest triumphs. She was dead. Antonio was dead. But the hornets were very much alive. The circus folk below were horrified. Returning to their senses at

last, they saw what horrors they had been involved in. Doctor Farrow was left with the broken remains of his sister. When I'd climbed back down the rope ladder, he had little to say to me. That I had tried to save her did nothing to alter the fact of her death. He looked at me, appalled by all of this waste. Respectfully, I left him and Sally with the body. I was a fool. I should never have left them, with what was in effect the hornets' next nest. It would remain so for the ensuing hundred years, until her feet found their way to the museum in Cromer. By what means they got there I was never to discover, but their journey began with the theft of her shattered corpse by her brother, from the very scene of her demise in the Circus of Delights.

THE DOCTOR: You see, I turned my back for a moment. I went to the Ringmaster's caravan knowing that I had to fetch his corpse away. I would bring it back here to the future, where it would sit like a giant garden gnome in my garden with my other relics of these bizarre adventures.
MIKE YATES: I knew I'd seen him, in the flesh, as it were.
THE DOCTOR: I was dragging this hollow dwarf back through the circus, when I realised that Doctor Farrow and Sally had gone. I shouted after them, and I cursed. The clowns looked at me in horrified perplexity, the animals set up a mournful dirge at the sight of their Ringmaster dead. The body of Francesca had been whisked away. I suspect it was the hornets' doing. They would never have let me take the body for myself. They got her away in the nick of time, dancing away on the summer air.
MIKE YATES: So that horrible gnome thing in your garden ... it was actually a real man. It was Antonio the Ringmaster.
THE DOCTOR: The very same, Mike. He's in perpetual stasis. Another macabre addition to my strange collection here at the cottage.
MIKE YATES: You're right. These stories of yours are getting positively darker, Doctor.
THE DOCTOR: They get several shades nastier yet, Mike.
MIKE YATES: That girl, the one on the high wire, there was really nothing you could have done to save her?
THE DOCTOR: It may sound heartless, I'm sure it does, but her fate was sealed. It was sealed as soon as I saw the dessicated feet and those slippers of hers one hundred years later at the seaside Palace of Curios. That's how time works, Mike.
MIKE YATES: But you thought it worth a try, didn't you, to attempt to keep her alive?
THE DOCTOR: Oh, it's always worth a try. And besides, I
MIKE YATES: You felt responsible.
THE DOCTOR: You know me very well.
MIKE YATES: Just because Antonio told you he had seen a blue box in the lagoons of Venice? Did you really believe him? He was stark raving mad, wasn't he?
THE DOCTOR: Proximity to the hornets would drive anyone mad, Mike, but there was a ring of truth to his words. I had hypnotised him, remember.
MIKE YATES: And so you knew you had been back even further in the past on the trail of these horrible insects.
THE DOCTOR: Ah, much further back. Further than Antonio's provincial Eighteenth Century. Much further. A thousand years or more before, that's where the TARDIS was taking me next.
MIKE YATES: I sense another tale in the offing.
THE DOCTOR: Just one. I have one more tale to offer you. We have just enough time before dawn for me to bring you almost up to date.
MIKE YATES: Forewarned is forearmed. I presume that I'll be facing these foes of yours myself before long. So I might as well gather all the intelligence I can.
THE DOCTOR: Be warned, Mike, in some ways my next story is the strangest and most horrible of them all.
MIKE YATES: I can hardly wait.
THE DOCTOR: Yes, and there's a sting in it, of course, as there is with all good tales.
MIKE YATES: I'd argue with that. What's wrong with a nice happy ending?
THE DOCTOR: Why, nothing, Mike, and I hope that's exactly what we'll have, eventually. It's nearly Christmas, after all.
MIKE YATES: I imagine we'll endure a good deal of horror in the meantime.
THE DOCTOR: Now listen well, while I take back, back, back a thousand years or more, into another deep midwinter.

(Tom Baker's closing Doctor Who theme, composed by Ron Grainer.)

ANNOUNCER: (Tom Baker) Hornets' Nest - The Circus of Doom, by Paul Magrs, starred Tom Baker and Richard Franklin. Sally was played by Susie Riddell. Doctor Farrow was Michael Maloney, Antonio was Stephen Thorne, and Francesca was Gilly Bond. The Script Editor was Michael Stevens, and it was Produced and Directed by Kate Thomas, and is published by BBC Audio Books.
(Note: Old Lady was played by Susan Jameson.)

Transcribed by David Tait